



# HEROIN: the basics

Heroin use is on the rise all over Wisconsin. Now that prescription drugs (the most commonly used illegal substance among teens besides marijuana) have become harder to obtain and abuse, young people from all walks of life are giving heroin a try. It's time you got the facts.

## THE DRUG

Heroin is an illegal drug that produces an intense, euphoric high when smoked, snorted or injected. It's made from morphine, and like other opiates, heroin is highly addictive.

In its purest form, heroin (also called boy, white, cheeva, brown sugar, H, Juan and tar) is a fine white powder. But street heroin looks grey, tan, brown or black. That's because dealers "cut" the drug with other substances, from sugar and caffeine to Benadryl and quinine.



The number of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 who have tried heroin has increased by more than 300% since 1995, according to the Foundation for a Drug-Free World.

## MYTH

Taking heroin is just like taking any other painkiller.

## REALITY

It may be an opiate like morphine or oxycodone, but street heroin is much more dangerous. Additives make it impossible to know a dose's strength or purity, so every hit is a risk.

## THE EFFECTS

Heroin is a sedative, so it slows down the body's normal functions. First-time users experience an intense, euphoric "rush" described by one Wisconsin teenager as a "painless, worriless, free feeling... like being a little kid again." The drug flushes the skin, makes arms and legs feel heavy and thoughts cloudy. It also dangerously slows a user's breathing and heartbeat.

Many heroin users seem drowsy while they're high. They drift in and out of consciousness. It's called "getting the nods," and it's one sure sign of heroin use.

## THE ADDICTION

Statistics suggest that more than 75% of those who try heroin once will use again. But because the brain builds up a natural tolerance to the drug's effects over time, users must take more heroin more frequently to feel the same high. Eventually, addicts find themselves taking the drug just to feel normal.

The body's physical addiction to heroin is very real. Many users seek their next fix to escape the tortures of withdrawal, which include muscle and bone pain, fever, diarrhea and vomiting. These symptoms can last for days, even weeks—and the longer you've used heroin, the worse they can be.

### MYTH

Snorting or smoking heroin is less addictive than injecting it.

### REALITY

It doesn't matter how you do it. Snorting, smoking and injecting heroin are all equally addictive and just as dangerous.

## THE DANGERS

Every time a person uses heroin, he or she risks dying from it. Overdosing on heroin is easy to do, since there's no way for a user to know how strong it is or what's really in it. The risks are even greater when heroin use is combined with other drugs or alcohol.

Heroin suppresses heart and lung function, causing users to pass out, even suffocate. People who overdose also face convulsions, coma and death. Other health risks include skin abscesses, liver disease, heart and lung infections. Users may even contract HIV/AIDS or hepatitis from sharing needles.

Of course, there are other consequences, like going to jail, or becoming the victim of violent crime and sexual assault.

**The number of heroin-related deaths in Wisconsin jumped by nearly 50% in 2012, according to a recent survey of county coroners.**



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

visit  
[doj.state.wi.us](http://doj.state.wi.us)  
or call  
(608) 266-1221



Danny's daughter Kara started using heroin her senior year of high school. She died of an overdose one year later. She was only 18.

## HELP US FIGHT HEROIN'S SPREAD

### LEARN MORE

**Visit [TheFlyEffect.com](http://TheFlyEffect.com)**

Experience the heroin spiral for yourself, learn more about its destructive power and hear from real heroin survivors right here in Wisconsin.

**Visit [Drugfree.org](http://Drugfree.org)**

The Partnership at Drugfree.org offers information and tools to help prevent use and provide help for drug and alcohol abuse by young people.

### GET HELP

**Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or visit [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)**

Free, completely confidential and available 24/7/365, SAMHSA's National Helpline and online Treatment Locator can help you find substance abuse treatment facilities, support groups and community-based organizations in your area.

EVERY SPIRAL HAS ITS START.



[TheFlyEffect.com](http://TheFlyEffect.com)